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The frequent Service of God in Publick, the Way to long Life, Honour, and undoubted Happiness:

SET FORTH IN A

S E R M O N

PREACHED at the

CONSECRATION

OF THE

NEW CHAPEL

IN

QUEEN'S-COLLEGE in OXFORD,

On the First Day of *Nov.* 1719.

By *JOHN GIBSON*, S. T. P. Provost of
the said College, and Prebendary of *Lincoln*.

O X F O R D,

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Imprimatur,

ROB. SHIPPEN

Vice-Can. Oxon.

Nov. 17. 1719.



TO THE
MOST REVEREND Father in GOD,
WILLIAM,
By DIVINE PROVIDENCE,
Lord Archbishop of *York*,
PRIMATE OF *ENGLAND*,
AND
METROPOLITAN.

May it please Your GRACE,



AMONGST the many
Instances of Your
GRACE's great Can-
dour whilst You ho-
noured Your College
with Your Prefence on the late
solemn Occasion, (for which we re-
turn

DEDICATION.

turn You our humblest Thanks)
I cannot think of a greater, than
Your favourable Opinion of the
following Discourse, which now
appears in Publick in Obedience
to Your GRACE's Commands.

The Society esteem it a great
Honour that Your GRACE was
pleas'd to take notice, with a par-
ticular Pleasure, of the Regula-
rity which You observ'd amongst
us; and I can with the same Plea-
sure assure Your GRACE, that
it was not Occasional. I Thank
God we are habituated to a Way
of Life which makes every one's
respective Duty easy to him; and
happily preserves that Harmony
and good Nature, which makes
us a mutual Blessing one to an-
other.

Thus

DEDICATION.

Thus we have gone on hitherto, and I hope we shall persevere in the same peaceable and orderly Way, under His MAJESTY'S Government, and Your GRACE'S Protection; for the long Continuance of which we shall daily, and devoutly pray to that good GOD, who has blessed us with a Place so solemn, and so agreeable, for the offering up of our daily Prayers. I am,

My LORD,

Your GRACE'S Most Dutiful

and Most Humble Servant,

JOHN GIBSON.

DEDICATION.

Thus we have gone on hitherto
and I hope we shall persevere
the same peaceable and orderly
Way under His Majesty's Good
Government, and His Majesty's
Providence, for the sake of our
Honor, of which we shall daily
and devoutly pray for His Majesty
and His Majesty's Successors
that He will be pleased to bestow
upon us His abundant Blessings
for the offering up of our souls
in His service.

Yours Affectionate Son,

John Gibson.



PSAL. LXXXIV. IO, II.

A day in thy courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

For the LORD God is a sun, and shield: the LORD will give grace, and glory.



It has been doubted whether holy *David* was the Author of this Psalm; or whether it was composed many years after by some other Prophet in the time of the Babylonish Captivity. Which ever it was, the circumstances which gave occasion to it had a near resemblance: and whether it was the former in his banishment from *Jerusalem*, and under persecution from *Saul*; or the latter mourning under tyranny, and oppression in a strange land; the end and design of the composure is the same, namely to shew, that the greatest and most desirable blessing that God could bestow upon his servant in this world was

A

to

to restore him to the solemn place of his worship; the want of which was more grievous and afflicting than that of any other enjoyment.

This plainly appears to be the Scope of this Psalm; and if a singular spirit of Devotion, and some eminently pathetical expressions will not point out its Author to have been the man after Gods own heart; yet a short comparison of it with some others unquestionably his, will make it highly probable that it cannot so well be ascribed to any other person: and that therefore it will not be an unreasonable presumption to take it for granted to be his.

And this I undertake with the greater pleasure in the entry upon this Discourse, because they contain such an harmony of inimitable devotion, suitable to this occasion; and that so exceedingly affecting as is hardly to be met with either in this book of Psalms; or indeed in any other of the inspired writings.

Thus then our longing Author, looking earnestly towards that only beloved object from which he was separated, and driven for a time, begins this Psalm: *O! how amiable are thy dwellings thou Lord of Hosts! my Soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*

Agreeable to this are the charming and melodious preludes to the 42 and 63 Psalms. *As the hart desireth the water brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee, O God. My Soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*

Pf. 63. O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee:

thee: my soul thirsteth for thee: my flesh longeth after thee: to see thy power and glory as I have seen thee in the Sanctuary.

Again, verse the 4th of this Psalm: *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee: which seems beautifully paraphrased in that of David before mentioned. Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: my Soul shall be satisfied as with marrow, and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.*

Now supposing such a harmony of divine thoughts and expressions to flow from the same mind, as it is very natural to do; we may conclude them to be the dictates of the same inspir'd writer. This being admitted; I shall in order to what I have to make out from my Text explain, what was meant in holy *David's* time; and what may be properly so in ours, by the *House, and Courts of God.*

Now God being infinite, and immense in his nature, he must needs fill all places with his presence. Thus he represents himself by the Prophet: *Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.* Jer. 23. 23, 24.

But though all places are filled with his Majesty, yet there are some more eminently distinguished for being so, and thence derive the honour of being stiled *the Courts, and Houses of the King of Kings.*

Such in a peculiar manner is that Mansion in the heaven of heavens, where Angels, and Archangels, Cherubim, and Seraphim are the ministring Spi-

rits : that mansion which none cloathed with mortality can enter ; but which in the consummation of all things will become the happy, and eternal dwelling of all his Saints.

And as he is thus pleased to vouchsafe especial manifestations of his glory where he fixes his *Throne* above, so he has condescended to put some signatures of his holiness in certain places of that his *footstool*, the *Earth* below. Such were all those sacred Abodes where from the beginning he chose to record his name : but none of them were so remarkable on this account, as that *Tabernacle* which he pitched with the seed of *Jacob*, and *Israel* his inheritance.

Exod. 40. It was that *Tabernacle* which was built by his own appointment for the solemnity of his service, and which (after the preparatory rites, and ceremonies which he commanded his servant *Moses*) he sanctified to himself by descending on it *in a pillar of a Cloud, and filling it with the glory of his presence.*

It was that *Tabernacle*, and the hill of *Zion*, that holy ground on which it was pitched, that *David* so longed after, and which he dignifies in my Text with the name of the *Courts, and the House of his God.*

It was there only that he found real, and true satisfaction ; it was there, that the employment of his time turned to so good an account, that a few moments spent in praying unto, and praising God, overballanced, and outweighed more numerous hours taken up in affairs of State, or indulged even in refined and princely diversions. *One day in thy Courts is better than a thousand.*

Nay

Nay, so much the more truly great did he esteem it to serve God, than to be waited on himself: to worship the great Creator of Heaven and Earth in that *beauty of holiness*, than to be honoured in his own Person in the stateliest Palaces (where there was neither fear of his Power, nor sense of his Mercies) that he would have made choice of the lowest and meanest Offices in the former, before an exalted Station in the latter. *He would rather have been a door-keeper in the house of his God, than to have dwelt in the tents of the ungodly.*

This is a taste, and relish so different from that which Men commonly have, that I fear such Dispositions, and Inclinations are very rarely to be met with. But would they set God before them, as the Psalmist did; as present in his holy Temple, and dispensing his Blessings to his People: Blessings which far surpass the Kingdoms of the Earth and the Glory of them, how chearfully and joyfully would they conclude with him, *O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee. For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace, and glory.*

This is what we may as comfortably hope for, and as certainly promise to our selves in these latter days, as *David* could do whilst the antient Tabernacle was yet standing. For as he is not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also, whom he has graciously called, and reconciled to himself by his Son; so likewise 'tis as true, that we may have as holy Courts, and as holy Temples as *Zion* was, when we piously set apart *an habitation for the same God of Jacob*, with like Solemnity, and Devotion.

If,

If, I say, we use the like Solemnity, and Dévotion in hallowing his Sanctuary: for that these are not empty Ceremonies, but a kind of natural Duty on our part, and highly acceptable to God, we may not only learn from the antientest Customs of the Heathen, but from his express Command, and the Practice of the best and wisest of his own People.

I need not divert you from the main end of this practical Discourse with many Instances to this purpose. 'Tis, indeed, a noble Subject to pursue: but it has likewise been so frequently, so fully, and so lately treated of by learned Men, that however proper it might otherwise be at this time, it certainly becomes the less so on that account. 'Tis enough to refer this Audience to *Solomon's* admirable Deportment at the Dedication of the Temple, wherein that great Prince's Wisdom and excellent Spirit appeared so eminently conspicuous, that it was no wonder the People, in a kind of holy Ecstasy, *blest the King, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart.*

1 Kings
8. 66.

And to make us who are met together this Day, on an occasion so exceedingly delightful as the Dedication of this House, truly sensible of the great Advantages we shall reap by the constant offering of our Morning and Evening Sacrifice of Prayers and Praises therein, I shall discourse from the Words which I have chosen for this purpose in the following Method,

I. I shall shew that the Shortness, and Uneasiness of Life must needs be the ground of a just and

and general Complaint to all those who look for, and expect their Happiness in this World only.

II. Offer an Expedient to alleviate, and in a great measure remove the Evils complain'd of; or a Method to lengthen, and sweeten the Portion given us under the Sun, namely a Constancy in the publick Service of God, *which will make one day better than a thousand.*

III. Confirm, and illustrate the Certainty and Evidence of this Expedient, because *God is a sun and shield, and giveth grace and glory.*

IV. And Lastly shew how a due Sense of his peculiar Goodness to us of this Place, and of the Happiness we enjoy in his Courts, ought to excite in us the sincerest Gratitude; and how much we are engaged to pour out our Hearts before him in the devoutest Expressions of it on this Occasion.

I. Then I am to shew that the Shortness, and Uneasiness of Life must needs be the ground of a just and general Complaint to all those who look for, and expect their Happiness in this World only.

For let any Man, who is about finishing his Period upon Earth, and has almost run the common Stage of Life, look back upon his Course (without taking in the Hopes of Futurity) and I doubt not but he will pronounce upon his Days, *that they have been few and evil.*

As to the Measure of our appointed time, the Complaints of the shortness of it, will be found to be well grounded in all respects.

'Tis

'Tis not only in regard of an endless Duration, and God's eternal Existence, that it is reckoned more inconsiderable than *a drop of water unto the sea*, and *a gravel stone unto the sand*; nay even as *nothing*; but, without any comparison, is expressed in Scripture by such Emblems as set before us a thing of the most narrow, fleeting, and transitory Nature.

Our *Age* is said to be as it were *a span long*; our days *to flee away as a shadow*, and our Life to be as *a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*. These indeed, must be owned to be figurative Expressions, but they are often found to be literally true, and always to bear some Analogy, and Proportion to the thing it self.

And yet alas! short as the Race is, the Men I am describing *have need of patience to finish it*. For though their continuance in it be but as a shadow, yet their labour seems long, and tedious; it being undoubtedly true, that they who are *without God in the world* can see no Good in it. They either meet with frequent Anxieties, and Disappointments which they cannot prevent; or make them where they need not, and disquiet themselves in vain.

But is there no redress for this uncomfortable State of Mankind, which is thus represented? Are all of us equally involved in this Calamity; and are we shortlived, and wretched too, without any Prospect of being otherwise?

Indeed, were it thus with us who could refrain his Lips; who would not speak in the Anguish of his Spirit; and complain in the Bitterness of his Soul?

But

But surely, God hath not thus dealt with us: for all his Prophets, whom he has sent to instruct us, have shewn us *that which is good*; and a way to improve Life (short as it is, and miserable as we make it) into an invaluable, and lasting Blessing.

Who then is the man that desireth life, and loveth many days that he may see good? Fear the Lord, and depart from evil: it shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones. Here then our Condition brightens, and our Complaints may be ended. Those who wean themselves from the treacherous, and deceitful enjoyments of the World, and come near to the Creator of it, will find this Wilderness changed into a fruitful field: and those who *walk with God*, as *Enoch* did, will find *the fear of the Lord to be such a fountain of life* that they need not envy the longest liver that has been upon the Earth; of whom it is said that he lived 969 Years, and then died.

For as *a thousand years with God are but as one day*; so on the other hand, to those who love his Courts, and the habitation of his Honour, *one day* will be as good, nay *better than a thousand*, spent in fruitless Searches, and unprofitable Pleasures.

And this is not only agreeable to Scripture; but Nature her self has been able to discover something very like it, where her light has been less obscured. For thus we find an Heathen Orator expressing himself in his addresses to Philosophy.

O vitæ Philosophia dux! Est unus dies bene, & ex præceptis tuis actus peccanti immortalitati anteponendus.

Cicero's
Tuf. Quest.
lib. 5.

Could a Sinners time be spun out beyond the common measure, and were even Immortality

consistent with his Condition, one Day spent in virtuous, and good actions ought to have the preference to it.

II. And this brings me to the Second thing I proposed from the Words, namely an Expedient offered by the Psalmist to alleviate, and, in a great measure, remove the Evils complained of under the former Head; or a Method to lengthen, and sweeten the Portion given us under the Sun, *One day in thy courts is better than a thousand.*

And to shew the justness of this Assertion, it will be enough to make out the two following Observations.

That the way to make the best of Life is to fix upon a right Object of Happiness, and to endeavour after the attainment of it before all other things.

That *God* is that Object; and that to spend our Life in his publick Service, and in such Studies as qualify us for the most considerable advantages of it, is not only a great improvement of our Condition, but certainly the greatest 'tis capable of in this World.

I need not offer any thing to prove the former Proposition; since it is a kind of first Principle, and has never been contradicted. For however different the Sentiments of Mankind have been about the *Greatest Good*, yet they always agreed that there was such a thing, and that Happiness was to be had on no terms without it.

What that is, we may in some measure learn by listening to the voice of Nature; and we shall be fully instructed, if we are attentive to the Dictates of Infinite Wisdom.

Na-

Nature will confess, that however extensive and well furnished her Boundaries are, they are yet too narrow and incompetent to give full satisfaction to the desire of our Souls. Enquire of her where shall Happiness be found, and what is the place thereof? *The depth will say it is not in me; and the sea will say it is not with me.* Wherever God the Giver and Disposer of it is, there we may find it.

And yet we need not be solicitous to ask, *who shall go up to heaven and bring it from thence?* for he is in his holy temple, near unto every one that calleth upon him.

Could then the Earth open her Bosom, and pour out all her Treasure: were all her choicest Pearls with her Kingdoms, and the Glories of them put in competition with his Service, which should we esteem the happier Men, the meanest Subjects in the narrowest sacred Cell, praying unto, and praising the Fountain of bliss, and the Creator of all things; or the most potent Monarchs of the Universe, who have him not in all their thoughts? Undoubtedly the former, if we allow Happiness, and Wisdom to be inseparably united; as they most certainly are. For what is Happiness, but a Condition agreeable to the best Rules of Wisdom; and what that is we are taught by the Author of it; who giving directions to wandering and mistaken Man, saith *Behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom.* Wisdom indeed in perfection, which *in her right hand carrieth length of days: for by her thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.*

Job 28. 28.

Prov. 9. 11.

But here it may be enquired, Is it fact that religious Men live longer than other People? In answer to which, I affirm that they do; and that for this reason; because the best Life is the longest. Some live a great pace, and by continual Industry and Diligence in serving God, and doing good, do really dispatch more of the true business of Life, and enjoy more of it in a few Years, than others do in a whole Age. So that it may be affirm'd of the wicked in general, that they *do not live out half their days.*

Again to set this in a clearer light; let us allow the Libertine, and the devout Person to number the same Months, and Years; yet there will be a material difference in their Periods; and notwithstanding what is thus allowed, the one may be said to live more, and longer than the other. For when the former has run his course he must needs tremble at his Dissolution, as only changing this state of Misery for a greater; or at the best, and according to his own wishes, to be no more. Whereas the latter makes the Grave his passage to a new Life, infinitely preferable to this; and from serving God in the Tabernacle of Flesh is receiv'd into Temples not made with Hands, and crowned with

Psal. 23. 4. Life immortal. *Though he walks through the valley of the shadow of death he can fear no evil; for thou, O God, art with him; thy rod, and thy staff comfort him.*

Who then, that has well weigh'd the comfortable way, and the still more comfortable end of him that serveth God; and compared it with the showy but short, and deceitful Enjoyments of him that

that ferveth him not: that sees the one set like the Sun, to arise with fresh Lustre; and the other fall like a Meteor, and drop into darkness; would not pronounce very differently of the extent of their Life taken in the best Sense of it; and daily, and devoutly pour out his Soul before God in the Psalmist's Words, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee.* Psal. 73. 25.

But without taking in Futurity to our Advantage; if we make the Experiment, we shall find that the Service of God in his House, does in its own Nature afford us the greatest present Good, and far exceeds the Pleasure that can arise from any other Employment. This we are assured of from one who made the Trial long before us, that divine Penman, whose inexhaustible Treasure of Piety furnishes us with so many Encouragements, as well as suitable Expressions on this Occasion. Reflecting on his constant addressees to God, what a flow of satisfaction sprung from his joyful Heart? *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most high: To shew forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night.* Psal. 92. 1, 2.

And where was it, I pray, that the good Man was so sensible of this? Had he all this satisfaction in holy Exercises in his private Retirements, and in his own House? Whence then was that distinguished, and abounding Joy, which he felt in uniform and common Acts of Adoration? *I was glad, says he, when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.* Psal. 122. 1, 2.

It

It was in the solemn Places of God's Worship, that he found those kindly warm meltings upon his Heart; those Raptures, and ravishing Transports of Affection.

Such devout Ecstasy was felt, and expressed by the Primitive Christians, who were impatient for the Hours, and Seasons of holy Assemblies. The warning Sound was no sooner heard but the Churches were filled; the Pavements covered with Bodies prostrate, and wash'd with Tears of devout Joy.

Tears, we know, are seldom shed on any joyful Occasion, but where the pleasing Passion overcomes our natural Powers, and is transporting: and were we alike *asbixt for God*; were our Souls *longing, and panting* after his Courts, we also *should be satisfied with the goodness, and fatness of his house*, and the Joy we felt would be unspeakable.

Of any extraordinary Degree of Happiness, we are apt to say, *it is heaven upon earth*; and if that Expression can be allowed in any Condition of Life, it must be in this. And indeed 'tis no new Saying, or peculiar to our selves; for St. Gregory long since made use of it, and much to the same Purpose that I have applied it: *ἐκκλησία ἐστὶν οὐρανόθεν ἐπίγειος*. The Church is Heaven among Men.

Of this every pious Man must be sensible in some Measure, when in the Congregation his Heart, and his Hands are lifted up on high: but undoubtedly they must have the greater relish of this heavenly satisfaction, who have tasted most freely of the good Word of God there read unto them; and whose Eyes are opened to understand the wondrous things

things of his Law. They who have loved it from the Breasts, laid Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept, will perceive *the words of it sweet unto their taste, yea sweeter than honey unto their mouth.*

Surely then it is good for us to be here: to be conversant with *Moses*, and *Elias*; with the Prophets, and Apostles, with our Blessed Redeemer the Son of God, and with our Heavenly Father himself, who in his due time will make those to *inherit* Luke 15. 31. *all things, who have been always with him.*

And now, should the gracious Dispenser of all things, put our Condition to our choice; and appear to any of us as he did to *Solomon* in a Dream by Night, saying, ask what shall I give thee, would not this be his Petition, and this his Request, *One* Psal. 27. 4. *thing do I desire of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.*

Thus, I hope, it appears from what has been said, that the Publick Service of God is a Method to sweeten, and lengthen our Lives; and to make it still more lovely and inviting let us consider what is farther offered to us in my Text, *For the Lord God is a sun and a shield: the Lord will give grace, and glory.*

Which Words are laid down as a Reason of the Psalmist's giving so great a preference to a Life of Piety, and Devotion, as a *thousand times better than any other*; and from which I shall endeavour, as I proposed in the Third Place to consider, and illustrate the Evidence of it.

III. As the Sun is to every living Creature, which receives a kind of new Life and Refreshment from it;

it; so is God to the Spirits of all good Men; to whose devout Addresses he ariseth, as that luminous Body does, with healing in his Wings.

This is a Light which always shines; a Light which is not obscured by any Clouds; but is the same by Night and by Day, at all times, and at all seasons. Whereas if we look into the ways of those who neglect his Service; we shall perceive such a spiritual Horror, as nothing can equal, but the grim Shadow of Death.

Hence the Scripture always represents Impressions of Light, and Joy stamp'd on the Mind from religious Exercises, and those of Gloominess, and Terrour on the Souls of those who have foolishly set God far above out of their sight. *The path of the just is as the shining light: but the way of the wicked is darkness.*

Prov. 4.
18, 19.

Exod. 10.
22, 23.

Of these different Conditions, there was an apt Resemblance in the *Israelites*, and *Egyptians*: the former being cheared with the brightest Day, whilst a long, and heavy Night overspread the latter.

Psal. 43.
3, 4.

Who then is weary of Darkness, and desirous that his Light may arise in Obscurity; let him be instructed by *David*, to whom, and after what manner to apply for it. *Send out, O God, thy light, and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God: unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.*

Psal. 91.
1, &c.

And as God is the *true light* which lighteth every good Man; so he is a *shield* to repel the Efforts of his Enemies; and to save, and defend him in time of Danger. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the*

*the most high, the Lord is his refuge, and his fortress. He shall cover him with his feathers; his truth shall be his shield, and buckler. Because he hath made the Lord his refuge, even the most high his habitation; there shall no evil befall him, neither shall any plague come nigh his dwelling. Hence he is said, to keep a good mans goings; and to give his Angels charge over him to keep him in all his ways. And these two valuable Blessings of God's being a sun, and a shield to men of devout and religious Lives, gave just occasion to the following Raptures of the Psalmist, *How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. With thee is the fountain of light, and in thy light shall we see light.** Psal. 36.
7, 9.

To make our Lives still happier, by our frequent Attendance in the house of God; our heavenly Father has yet more Blessings in store for those his Children, who love his Habitation. For besides his being their day spring from on high; their Buckler, and their Refuge; he will add *grace and glory.*

Ο Θεός χάριν καὶ δόξαν δώσει. Where by Grace, may either be understood that favourable Esteem which all Mankind (even wicked Men) generally have for Persons truly zealous for the Lord God of Hosts, and the Sacredness of his Altars; or those spiritual Blessings which are usually dispensed in the House of Prayer.

The Word is often used in both Significations in the Scriptures; and may, with good Assurance, be so taken in this place. For who has ever accustomed himself from his Infancy to an affectionate

nate longing after his Courts, and has always shewed Joy and Gladness at every Opportunity of standing in his Presence ; but as he has *increased in age*, he has likewise increased *in wisdom, and in favour with God, and with men.*

And this is no common Favour, that I mean, which comes from our Fellow-Creatures ; and such as arises from the beautiful Make of our Bodies, our Learning, undaunted Courage, and the like ; but is fixed and secure ; it grows and improves from *grace into glory.*

For it is esteem'd honourable, and glorious to be admitted near to the Person of a temporal Prince, who is only a faint Representative of the great King of Kings, (who at his Pleasure putteth down one, and setteth up another) how much greater Glory is reflected on all those, who are the Servants of the God of Heaven, and stand continually in his Presence ?

It does not, indeed, always happen that Piety is attended with Promotion in this World ; or that those who honour God most by an entire Dedication of their Studies, and their Lives to his Service are constantly raised above their Brethren ; but it generally proves so ; and the surest way to be great before Men is to be good before God. For how frequently has it pleased him on this account to raise the meanest *from the dust, and to set him with princes, even with the princes of his people ?*

The holy Scriptures abound with Examples of this Nature to provoke our Emulation. What else made *Joseph* a Father unto *Pharaoh* ; put the Sceptre of *Israel* into *David's* Hands ; and made

Da-

Daniel Ruler over the whole Province of *Babylon*?

But for many such, though not equal Instances of this; we need not extend our search beyond the Limits of this Nursery appropriated to his Altar, which has not only produced Numbers of Persons qualified for the highest Offices in Church and State, but such as have shone in the brightest Spheres of both, especially the former.

But however it fares in this World with those, who delight in God's Service: though instead of being exalted in the Kingdoms of the Earth, they become like the great Exemplar of Devotion, *despised, and rejected of men*; or like the *Saints*, whom we this Day commemorate, *have trials of cruel mockings, and scourgings*: yet sure they are of a more desirable Glory in the Kingdom of God, a Glory which shall not be done away. *For when those that sleep in the dust shall awake; they that have been thus wise shall shine as the firmament, and as the stars for ever, and ever.* Dan. 12.
2, 3.

It was this View which yielded Comfort to the Martyrs and Confessors of old, under all the Reproaches, and Indignities which Malice could invent, or offer; the Assurance I mean which they had, that this Life ended, *God would be unto them an everlasting light, and their God their glory.*

Now besides the regard which is had to Piety in our Days; this their Confidence in the Lord may likewise be ours, if with them we love and worship the Lord our God with all our Heart, and all our Soul, and all our Strength; and count all things but dross (as indeed they ought to

be counted) in Comparifon of divine Knowledge.

And blessed, yea for ever blessed be thy holy Name, O Lord God Almighty! who by thy Grace, and the Bounty and Charity of our pious Founder, and Benefactors haft led us into the right way to thefe inestimable Blessings: who haft caused us to draw near unto thy self; and haft enabled us to finish this thy Sanctuary; where not only we who are alive this Day, but our latest Successors shall daily praise thee, and lift up their Voice with Thanks unto thee saying, *What are we, O Lord, and what is our father's house that thou hast brought us hitherto? O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men!*

The Sparrow rejoyced in her House, and the Swallow delighted in her Nest when they built at thine Altar, O Lord of Hosts! And in what Transports of rational Joy ought we to express our Gratitude, when we are not only admitted to dwell there, but are called, and invited to taste, and see the Goodness of our God?

IV. And this naturally leads me in the Fourth and Last Place to shew, how a due Sense of our Happiness ought to excite in us the sincerest Gratitude to God, and that we ought to pour out our Hearts before him in the devoutest Expressions of it, especially on this solemn Occasion.

The Enjoyment of all good things is a Condition not consistent with our present Being; that
of

of those which are most necessary, and useful, is as great a Degree of Happiness as either we can arrive at, or our Wishes ought to aspire to. And is this our Case, and can we be insensible of our Duty?

No doubt, but God knows what is best for his Creatures far better than they do themselves; and if his Goodness has granted that to us, which his Wisdom has declared to be so, have we not the greatest reason in the World to be exceedingly thankful?

All the Solitude of Mankind, is either for their Bodies, or their Souls: and has not God's Providence taken care of us in respect of both? He has reached unto us by the Hands of our Founder, and Benefactors *our daily bread*: and he extends the like Bounty to our Souls *in feeding them with food convenient for them. For every one that hungrerh after righteousness may be filled with the fruits thereof; and they that thirst may come and drink of the waters of life freely.*

In short, we have daily Opportunities of improving every Moment of our Time to more Advantage, than many others do a thousand. For he, whose loving Kindness is better than Life it self, is pleased to dwell with us, and to pitch his Tabernacle amongst us. God himself is pleased to become our Portion, and the Lot of our Inheritance; and each of us may justly call upon his Soul, and all that is within him, to bless him and to praise him for ever, because the Lot is fallen unto him in a fair Ground, and he has a goodly Heritage. *For blessed,*

Psal. 65. 4.

O Lord, is the man whom thou chooshest, and causest him to

to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy Courts : he shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

Ezra 3. 11.

According to the Method I laid down, I shall conclude this Discourse with this apposite Remark, That if the *Jews* at the laying the Foundation of the Second Temple, which fell far short of the Beauty, and Grandeur of the First, *sung together by course in praising, and giving thanks unto the Lord ; and shouted with a great shout because the foundation of that house was laid :* with what greater Degrees of Joy ought we to be transported at the finishing this Habitation of God, which perhaps as far surpasses the former, as that of *Solomon*, built in the height of Prosperity, outdid the best Endeavours of the returning Captives ? *Wherefore praise ye the Lord : for it is good to sing praises unto God ; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.*

And now, O Lord, who hast enabled us to build this House for thy Honour, and our own Happiness, let we beseech thee thy Holy Spirit sanctify it, and us.

And thou, O Blessed Redeemer of Mankind, who hast promised that wherever two, or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt be in the midst of them, behold thy Servants, and be it unto us according to thy Word. So will we always give Thanks unto thee for thine infinite Mercies, that we may daily perform our Vows.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory in all the Churches of the Saints both now and evermore. Amen. Amen.

F I N I S.

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